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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 MUSCAT 002196

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SUBJECT: OMAN: 2004 ANNUAL TERRORISM REPORT

REF: A. SECSTATE 259427

[1](#)B. SECSTATE 245841

Classified By: Ambassador Richard L. Baltimore III.  
Reason: 1.4(c).

[1](#)1. (U) In accordance with reftel B, paragraph 2, Embassy Muscat provides the following update to Oman's coverage in the 2003 Patterns of Global Terrorism ("Patterns") report:

BEGIN TEXT

Oman continued to provide public statements of support for the global war on terrorism, and has been responsive to requests for Coalition military and civilian support. During the last three years, the Government of Oman has implemented a tight anti-money laundering regime, including surveillance systems designed to identify unusual transactions, with plans to require financial institutions to verify customer identities using sophisticated biometrics technology. Omani financial authorities also remain committed to freezing the assets of any UN-listed individual found in Oman.

Oman is a party to 10 of 12 international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism, but has not yet acceded to the other two, including the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism.

END TEXT

NOTE: (C) "There were no incidents of terrorist activity in Oman in 2003" was redacted from the 2003 Patterns report. See paragraph 2. END NOTE

[1](#)2. (SBU) Embassy Muscat also addresses the following information on Omani government counter-terrorism ("CT") efforts and attitudes, in response to relevant portions of reftel B, section 15:

-- (SBU) The Omani government was responsive to all coalition requests, both military and civilian.

-- (SBU) Oman has ratified 10 of the 12 international conventions and protocols against terrorism; the government of Oman said it intends to ratify the remaining two, including the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism.

-- (SBU) The Omani government continued to provide public and private statements of support for the Global Coalition Against Terrorism. For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued numerous statements condemning international acts of terrorism, including on December 7, 2004, following the terror attack on the U.S. Consulate General in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; and on June 19, 2004, following the beheading of an American Hostage in Iraq. Oman similarly denounced the beheading of a South Korean hostage in Iraq on June 23, 2004, and the terror attacks on a residential compound in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, on May 30, 2004. Additionally, Oman's Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs joined GCC colleagues on September 14, 2004 in issuing a joint condemnation of international terrorism. The Foreign Ministry likewise urged calm and an end to violence in Iraq on April 8, 2004.

-- (SBU) Over the last three years, the government of Oman has implemented a tight anti-money laundering regime, including surveillance systems designed to identify unusual transactions. Sultan Qaboos Bin Said also issued a Royal Decree on July 6, 2004, announcing new statutes to block money laundering. Furthermore, the Central Bank of Oman announced plans this year to require financial institutions to verify customer identities using sophisticated biometrics technology.

-- (SBU) Oman also supported the creation of a regional FATF-style body in Bahrain to combat financial crimes, which was inaugurated November 29-30, 2004 in Manama. In addition, and pursuant to their U.N. commitments, the Omani financial authorities have committed to freezing the assets of any U.N.-listed terrorists found in Oman. To date, however, none are known to have been located.

-- (C) Both the Royal Army of Oman ("RAO") and the Sultan's Special Force ("SSF") maintain missions to monitor and interdict terrorist (in addition to narcotics and illegal immigration) activity in areas along the joint Omani-Saudi Arabian and Yemeni borders. Oman also deploys military forces for short and mid-term operations for specific CT missions. Oman's Foreign Military Sales ("FMS") program has significantly enhanced CT capabilities for both the RAO and SSF.

-- (C) The Royal Oman Police ("ROP") Coast Guard is increasing its maritime interdiction capabilities and operations, which are believed to extend out 12 nautical miles. However, both the Royal Navy of Oman and the Coast Guard are considering expanding their abilities to monitor commercial shipping farther off Oman's extensive coast. Again, Oman's FMS program has significantly enhanced CT capabilities for the Coast Guard.

-- (SBU) Other major CT efforts undertaken during the past year were centered on training, to include courses facilitated by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's Office of Anti-Terrorism Assistance Programs (DS/ATA). Specifically, officials from the Omani security apparatus, primarily the ROP, participated in DS/ATA-sponsored courses and consultations pertaining to forensic DNA analysis, explosive detector K-9's, interdiction of terrorist organizations, and mass casualty/weapons of mass destruction response.

-- (C) Utilizing previous DS/ATA training (e.g., Vital Installation Security), the ROP was extremely proactive in dealing with June 2004 threat information specific to Halliburton operations in Oman. The Omani security apparatus continues to devote considerable resources to ensure the security of Halliburton officials and the oil rigs it supports. NOTE: The attention to Halliburton is likely, at least in part, based on an understanding of the value of the company to Oman, as their services are relied upon almost exclusively to maintain the Sultanate's oil production. END NOTE.

-- (S/NF) The Omani security and intelligence services take their work seriously and are well-funded and well-motivated. While there were no incidents of international or domestic terrorism in Oman since the Embassy's last submission, two separate - and previously unknown - al-Qa'ida-associated terrorist cells were taken down in Oman, reflective of al-Qa'ida's success in inspiring like-minded extremists to attack U.S. interests in the Arabian Peninsula. The arrests are believed to have derailed the cells' ongoing plots, one of which was aimed at U.S. interests in Oman, to include the U.S. Embassy. In the past year, Oman has witnessed more activity as an operating area and staging ground for terrorists, and the fact that the two cells were previously unknown points to the possibility that similar cells may be present in Oman.

-- (S/NF) Oman's penchant for secrecy means that neither of the aforementioned arrests were made public; terrorists from both incidents were processed and received stiff sentences through secret legal proceedings. Islamic extremism is viewed as a threat to stability in Oman at a time when government policy is to seek foreign investments and attract tourism. The security and intelligence services are charged with protecting the implementation of these two critical components of Oman's foreign policy.

-- (SBU) The Embassy knows of no impediments to Omani prosecution and/or extradition of suspected terrorists.

-- (S/NF) The Omani government makes great efforts to combat extremism and violence-supporting ideology. It takes a comprehensive view of its domestic extremist problem and most often seeks in the first instance to rehabilitate, with the help of community and tribal leaders, those Omani citizens discovered to harbor extremist tendencies or sympathies. The Omani Government considers the problem of religious extremism to be rooted in economic, educational, and social reasons. Thus, the Omani Government monitors the country's modernization closely and seeks to direct economic development into poorer parts of Oman that might be more susceptible to the extremists' message.

-- (S/NF) The Grand Mufti of Oman is a well-known temperate figure in Islamic circles, and his moderating influence in the debate on the proper role of religion is accomplished with the blessing and support of Sultan Qaboos Bin Said. More directly, the Omani security services monitor the content of mosque sermons through a nation-wide network of reporting sources and warn those imams who delve into political matters or criticize other faiths not to stray into sensitive areas. Those who persist will find themselves in an Omani court signing "cease and desist" orders, which carry stiff legal consequences if disobeyed.

-- (SBU) In summary, the Omani government - as a matter of policy and practice - remains steadfastly opposed to terrorism, international and domestic.

13. (U) Updated text for Oman's coverage in Patterns (paragraph 1) will be forwarded via e-mail to addressees listed in reftel A.

14. (U) Embassy Muscat's point of contact for this report is RSO Peter M. Riva (rivapm@state.sgov.gov).  
BALTIMORE